

# Recovering America's Legacy: The Need for Prompt Action in Federal Forests

When science, management objectives, and experience call for action after catastrophic events such as windstorms, insect outbreaks, hurricanes, wildfires, and ice storms, federal forest managers need the tools to act quickly. In many areas, quick recovery and reforestation can ensure provision of forest benefits such as clean water, wildlife habitat, forest products, recreation, and aesthetics.

## DELAYED ACTION: Federal Forests Further Damaged



Peter Kolb, University of Montana

### Inaction After Wildfires Leads to More Damage

Shown here in a photo taken in August, 2004 are dead and dying trees infested with Douglas-fir Beetles following the 2000 Bitterroot Fire which burned 356,000 acres of forestland in Montana. These trees were weakened by the fire making them susceptible to beetles. The beetles have infested approximately 30,000 acres starting in the burned area and spreading into adjacent healthy forests.

This infestation could have been slowed if federal managers were allowed to remove the weakened trees shortly after the fire. However, to date, 5 years after the fire, only 4 percent of the burned federal lands have been recovered and reforested. The Forest Service has been prevented from recovering the remaining areas, which in turn fuels the beetle problem.

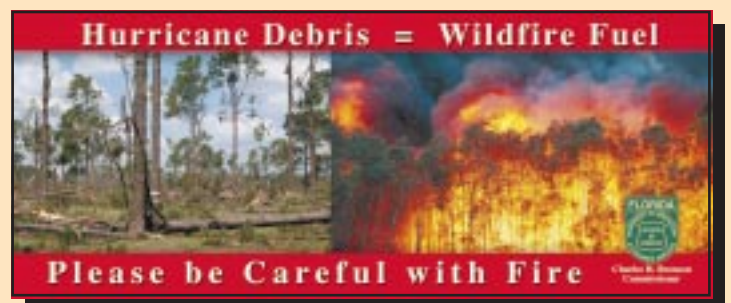
## TIMELY ACTION: Federal Forests Improved



Tahoe National Forest

### Successful Reforestation: 44 Years After the Volcano Fire

This photo, taken in 2004, shows the results of prompt reforestation efforts following the Volcano Fire of 1960. At the time, federal managers were able to act quickly and reforestation was successful. Today, because of process obstacles, federal managers cannot act quickly.



**Congress needs to provide federal forest managers expedited environmental and public involvement processes so they can act quickly. Our forests, watersheds, and critical wildlife habitat are too valuable to be left to chance.**

# Forest Managers Can Achieve Results but Process Obstacles Prevent Rapid Recovery

Federal forest managers need more efficient processes to address environmental reviews, appeals, and litigation. They also need additional research, monitoring, and resources to complete the recovery work.

## More Than 3 Years Later: Recovery and Reforestation Remain Stalled

*The Eyerly Fire burned 17,871 acres of Oregon's Deschutes National Forest in July, 2002. Minimal recovery has occurred, as evidenced in this photo taken in September, 2005. Excessive process requirements, appeals, and litigation have delayed the recovery and reforestation efforts by more than 3 years and now the burned timber has little value.*

*The Forest Service has been unable to sell the timber because the quality quickly degraded and they lack resources to reforest the area. It will take decades for this forest to recover on its own and hazardous fuel conditions will persist.*



Paul Adams

## Research and Monitoring Can Improve Results

“Often, federal land managers are forced to prepare excessively lengthy, time consuming, and detailed environmental analyses to justify projects. We know that timely recovery and reforestation after catastrophic events can minimize the impact of future events. **More research and monitoring can help us do an even better job – but this shouldn't stop us from taking action based on what we already know.** By using existing research and creating new research partnerships as integral parts of active problem solving, federal agencies can be sure they do the right thing for the forest over the long term.”

– Dr. Hal Salwasser, Dean, Oregon State University, College of Forestry

## Paperwork Takes Resources from Project Implementation

*Shown here is the analysis and court documentation for a 1,080-acre wildfire risk reduction project totaling 15,000 pages. This is typical of many federal projects including those dealing with catastrophes.*





# Reforestation Backlog Grows from Cumbersome Process and Increasing Catastrophes



Tahoe National Forest

## Cottonwood Fire 10 Years Later: Unsuccessful Reforestation

*The Cottonwood Fire burned in 1994 on California's Tahoe National Forest. More than 10 years later, the area remains a brush field. Federal managers planted seedlings after the fire but process obstacles prevented treatment of competing brush and consequently prevented seedling survival. Today the area is predominately a brush field and will remain so for many years unless the area is treated.*

“Immediate action improves the odds of seedling survival and growth. The absence of such a reforestation program will destine much of the burned area to shrub and hardwood cover for decades to come.”

– John Sessions, Researcher at Oregon State University (*Journal of Forestry* article on the Biscuit Fire in Oregon, April/May, 2004)

## With 900,000-acre Backlog, Forest Service Falls Behind in Reforestation

If future reforestation and timber stand improvement needs continue to outpace the Forest Service's ability to meet these needs and treatments are delayed... Unmet needs could prevent the Forest Service from achieving its forest management objectives, such as protecting wildlife habitat or improving forest health.

– GAO Report on Reforestation and Timber Stand Improvement Needs, April, 2005



Danny Dructor

Gay Ippolito, US Forest Service

## Successful Reforestation after Texas Windstorm: July, 2005

*The 1998 windstorm in east Texas affected approximately 70,000 acres of the Sabine National Forest. Following the event, the Forest Service was given authority to use an expedited environmental review process that shortened the timeframe for the recovery efforts but still complied with environmental laws. This authority has only been granted to the Forest Service in 3 other instances because there is no clear direction for the use of the authority. The larger photo taken in July, 2005 shows longleaf pine seedlings flourishing following successful recovery and reforestation efforts.*

# Action = Recovery

Prompt action accelerates the recovery of wildlife, water, recreation, and beauty.

## Action:

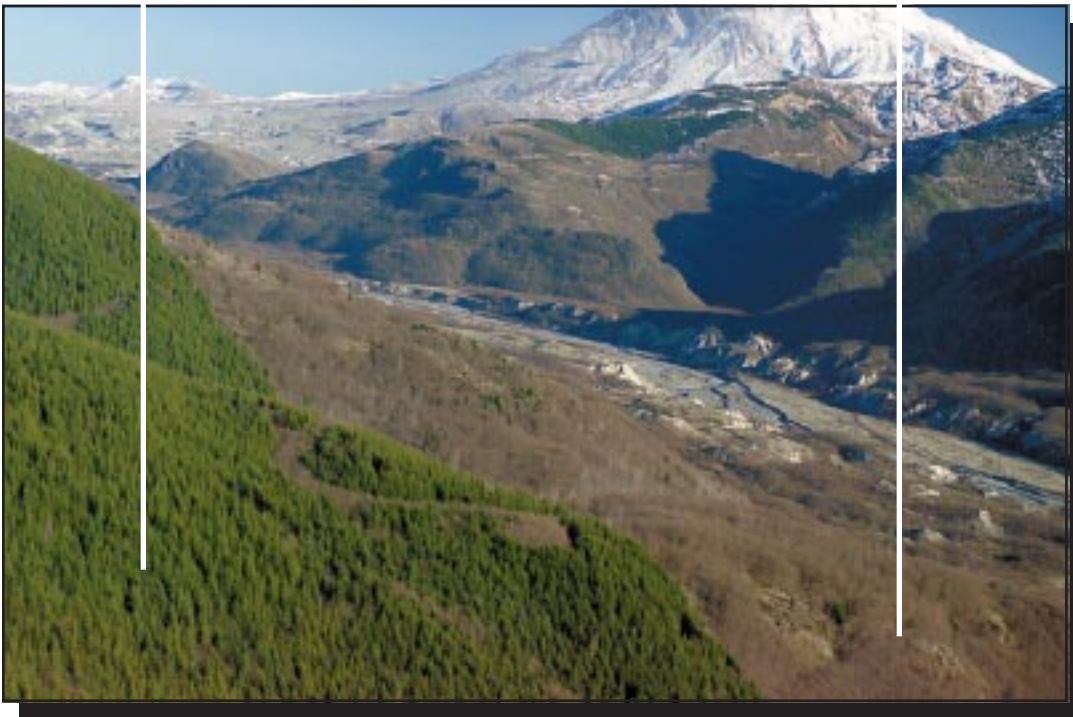
- Enhances wildlife habitat
- Improves water quality
- Speeds reforestation

## Inaction:

- Increases damage to water supplies
- Impacts wildlife habitat
- Reduces recreational opportunities

Action

Inaction



David Putnam, Weyerhaeuser Company



### Inaction Creates Safety Hazards

*Untreated forests create safety hazards for recreationists.*

## Mt. St. Helens Eruption 25 Years Later: Action Speeds Recovery Where Necessary

*The National Volcanic Monument at Mount St. Helens was set aside to watch and learn natural restoration processes. Natural recovery in the monument will eventually occur and because of the monument designation, this is an acceptable strategy. Areas outside the monument were reforested. The monument boundary is evident in this photo. The Douglas-fir trees on the left side were planted in 1983 on Weyerhaeuser property. This contrast demonstrates that active recovery and reforestation speeds the process and can help to ensure forest benefits where management objectives allow.*

### Keys to Responsible Stewardship:

- Timely public involvement
- Efficient environmental analysis
- Effective partnering with other landowners
- Continued research and monitoring



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The Society of American Foresters represents more than 15,500 forest managers, academics, researchers, and administrators. We support professional management of the nation's priceless federal forests to ensure they are protected and restored for sustainable uses and values.

